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SENSITIVE  
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DEPT FOR AF/E AND S/USSE  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: RDFF ACCUSES GSE OF COLLABORATING WITH JEM

11. (SBU) The leader of a small Darfuri rebel group is suspicious of Eritrea's interest in Darfur. Salah Abdurrahman Abualsurra, president of the Revolutionary Democratic Forces Front (RDFF), an Arab-aligned Darfur movement, told poloff the group is skeptical of Eritrea's interest in Darfur. "Every government in the region simply wants to maintain power" he stated, "including the Eritrean."

He told poloff the Eritrean government (GSE) is not interested in seeking peaceful solutions to Darfur, and only wants to protect its interests. "JEM is Eritrea's first line of defense" he claimed. Regarding other larger Darfuri groups, such as the Sudan Liberation Army, he speculated the GSE wishes to incorporate them under the JEM banner. He also claimed the GSE maintains close ties with Chad in order to support JEM and safeguard itself against Sudan.

12. (SBU) Mr. Abualsurra also outlined RDFF's three-tiered strategy for international engagement in Darfur. In an ideal scenario, the African Union would take the lead on organizing grassroots dialogue among community members within Darfur. The European Union (EU) would handle bilateral engagement with neighboring countries based on colonial ties (i.e., France would pressure Chad to cease support for rebel groups). The United States would oversee the entire operation, providing logistical and financial support where needed.

13. (SBU) As for RDFF's own power base, Mr. Abualsurra claimed the RDFF had recently aligned four other Arab groups under its lead in Juba. He also accused JEM of "not even being representative of the Zagawan ethnic group." JEM mostly consists of Chadian Zagawans, he elaborated.

14. (SBU) Finally, Abualsurra told poloff about a recent RDFF meeting with Abdella Jabir, the Eritrean political party's Sudan specialist. According to Jabir, "Scott Gration is welcome at any time in Eritrea, but the United States constantly seeks to sideline us from the discussions." Abualsurra remained skeptical of Jabir's sincerity, but passed the information along as a courtesy.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: In recent months, the GSE has shifted support from small Darfuri groups such as RDFF to larger entities like JEM. Abualsurra's bitterness towards the GSE mirrors the sentiments of other resident Darfuris who feel the GSE has abandoned them. The GSE's increase in support for JEM likely stems from Sudan voting with the AU to sanction Eritrea. The support for JEM may also reflect the GSE's concern about renewed violence in the east following

the 2010 elections and another north-south conflict after the  
2011 referendum.  
McMullen